



## APA Citation Style (Quick Guide)

### What is APA?

The American Psychological Association (APA) is a national organization that determines formatting standards for work in the sciences. If you are a student, this means the APA determines the required layout for information like in-text citations and the works cited page of many essays you will write for many of your science courses, such as Psychology or Biology. This guide provides some APA-style citation basics. You may find more detailed instructions about APA style in the MTSU *EasyWriter* or *Research Matters*.

### Why does citation matter?

Whenever you refer to someone's words or ideas, whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting, you have a responsibility to your readers to cite your source. If you do not cite your sources' words or information, you are committing plagiarism (academic theft). Whether intentional or accidental, it has consequences (see [MTSU's definition of plagiarism](#)). See our resources on Writing Responsibly and Citation for more information. Understanding your citation style can go a long way toward helping you write responsibly.

### What's an in-text citation?

Writers use **in-text (parenthetical) citations** when they make reference to someone else's ideas through paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting.

In-text citations in APA format typically include:

1. The author's name
2. The year of publication
3. The page number(s) referenced

The name may appear either in the sentence itself or in the parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase/summary, but the page numbers always appear in parentheses. For example:

Although existing theories have been discredited, new theories are proposed each day (Jones, 1998, p. 29).

-or-

Jones (1998) suggests, "Particular systems regulate these environments." (p. 29).

### What if the source has no author?

If the source has no author and still is reliable, use an abbreviated version of the work's title or whatever information is at the beginning of the corresponding works cited entry.

For example:

One study once argued that Zinsser's own theory was incomplete ("Neuropsychological Cognition," 2001, p. 89).

### What if the source has no page numbers?

If the source is web/electronic, it may not have page numbers. When possible, cite author(s) and the publication date. If no author is available, cite the article title. If no date is available, cite "n.d.":

Hilton and Merrill provide examples of effective neurotransmitters (2008).

Shoppers display three types of behaviors ("Retail Study," n.d.).

### What is a “References” page... and how do I make one?

The references section lists every source cited in your text. If you didn’t cite it in your paper, don’t add the source to your references page.

The purpose of the references page is to provide a roadmap to your sources so that other scholars or researchers can find them. This means that, as a writer, you need to provide as much information as you can about where and how to find a source.

Scholarly sources include a variety of media, and each type of source has its own citation style. To find the formatting guidelines for the particular type of source you are working with, consult one of the following:

- McGraw-Hill Education. (2013). *Research matters at MTSU* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Lunsford, A. A. (2014). *Middle Tennessee State University EasyWriter* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
- American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- American Psychological Association (2010). *Concise rules of APA style* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

### Start citing!

Overwhelmed by the amount of the information needed for a citation? Before you begin creating your citation, collect as much information as you can about the source.

Some sources, particularly electronic ones, may not provide information like author name, publisher, or publication date. Some of this information will appear at different locations in your citation, depending on the type of source being used.

Author Name(s)	
Title of the Work	
Editor Name(s)	
Title of the Collection, Newspaper, or Journal	
DOI (for journal articles)	
Publisher	
Publisher city and state (for books and anthologies)	
Volume number (if available)	
Issue number	
Page number(s)	
Date of publication	
URL of website	
Website name	
Website publisher	
Publication medium	



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